

## Three books on Precessional Astrology as encoded in myth.

Reviewed by Bruce Scofield

(Originally published in the NCGR Journal, Winter 2000-2001)

Santillana, Giorgio de and Hertha von Dechend. *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time*. Boston: Gambit, Inc. 1969

"Hamlet's Mill" should be regarded as a watershed publication in the history of astrology. It has inspired many writers, including the two more recent books reviewed below. Santillana and von Dechend's dense, 505-page book argues that ancient mythology and cosmology contains, in in sybolic form, information about the precession of the equinoxes and the shifting of the ages. Make no mistake, the authors, an historian and ethnologist, are not astrologers. While they regard astrology as a kind of lingua franca of the past, they do not consider it in its modern form anything other than a fad for the ignorant. But, their work stands as a major reference in astro-mythology.

What Santillana and Dechend do in *Hamlet's Mill* is to show that many world myths contain information that can be dated by astronomical cycles, and that this fact changes the notion of just what exactly is "prehistory." To make their case the authors present myths from all over the world to show that human knowledge of precession, really a kind of astrology, runs deep, very deep, in the consciousness of our species. They suggest that many myths were created with the intention of being popular with the many, but understandable by the few. In that way a deeper understanding of time and its organization could be passed down the centuries.

"Hamlet's Mill" is not easy reading. The authors drag us from one bizarre tale to another and only occasionally delve into the astronomical mechanics of precession. They regard their book as a kind of hologram, something that needs to be seen from every possible angle. In many respects, this is as much a book about the origins of consciousness as it is an interpretation of global mythology. Despite the fact that it has been in print for over 30 years, students of astro-mythology will find this work essential.

Sullivan, William. *The Secret of the Incas: Myth, Astronomy, and the War Against Time*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. 1996.

*The Secret of the Incas* concerns itself with the astronomy of ancient Andean civilization, a topic on which little (with the exception of Gary Urton's books) has been written. Sullivan's perspective and method has its roots in Santillana and Dechend's "Hamlet's Mill," a work that has turned out to be very influential. He applies their idea to Andean civilization and "proves" that astronomically-minded shamans were aware of outer planet cycles and the precession of the equinoxes, and that they were correlating positional changes of the Milky Way at the solstices with historical events. These original native insights and calculations were done millenia ago at the dawn of Andean civilization near Bolivia's Lake Titicaca.

Apparently, this precessional knowledge was passed on through time to the Inca royalty some 2,000 years later. They believed that all of Andean civilization would end coincident with changes that would occur in the sky just before dawn at the December solstice. It turned out that just about the time the Milky Way ceased to rise with the ecliptic (Sun's path) on the day of the solstice, the Spanish came and destroyed their empire. The Incas knew this would happen - it was

their secret.

In making his argument, Sullivan is forced to confront astrology. If astrology is to be defined as the study of the correlations between astronomical movements and events on earth, then *The Secret of the Incas* is really a book about the precessional astrology of Andean culture. Sullivan, however, is terribly uninformed on astrology. In my opinion, he has wasted a lot of time (his and mine) by ignoring the literature of this important subject.

The Secret of the Incas is a book about how ancient Andean civilization tracked its own history through correlations with astronomical cycles, primarily Jupiter-Saturn cycles and the precession of the equinoxes. These correlations were apparently so precise that a cultural fatalism developed, which infected the last Incas to such a degree that they instituted a program of human sacrifice to stave off the end of their era. When Pizarro arrived on the scene, he encountered a society that on some level already knew the game was up. Whether you buy his arguments or not, Sullivan's book attempts to fill a huge hole in our understanding of Andean myth, astronomy, astrology and pre-history.

Jenkins, John Major. *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012: The True Meaning of the Maya Calendar End Date*. Sante Fe, NM: Bear & Co.1998.

One of the most widely talked about, yet badly misunderstood, New Age themes is that of the end date of the Mayan calendar. Most of the responsibility for this sad situation must go to Jose Arguelles who, as the founder of the Harmonic Convergence of 1987 and the author of Dreamspell, promotes his own interpretation of Mayan astrology. If you want a far more sober discussion on this important subject, this is the book.

Maya Cosmogenesis 2012 is a comprehensive book, one that provides the reader with immense amounts of detail about the Maya, their myths, astronomy, and history. Most of this information is academically solid - Jenkin's references are academically impeccable. But Jenkins, who is an independent scholar, also takes off where the archae and ethno astronomers stop and leaves us with a more astrologically satisfying understanding of Maya astronomy. Although the 5,124-year Long Count of the Maya has been known for years, and is equivalent to 1/5 of the precession cycle, Jenkins points out that the end date of the count, December 21, 2012, coincides with the passage of the winter solstice point very close to the galactic center (actually the dark band in the middle of the Milky Way called by the Maya "the road to Xibalba," i.e. the underworld, the place where Creation occurred). While this observation has been made by a few other writers, Jenkins elaborates on it and shows how it was even incorporated into Mayan architecture.

Another very interesting observation made by Jenkins has to do with his interpretation of the Maya creation myth called the Popol Vuh. Analyzing the layout of one of the most ancient Maya ruins, Izapa, and using it as a reference for the interpretation of myth, he suggests that there was once a time when the ancient sky mythology centered on the polar stars. Later, a shift in astronomical orientation occurred and the galactic plane became the "official" astronomical framework of the Maya. The fall of 7-Macaw, who was both the ruler of the previous age and the Big Dipper, that is told in the Popol Vuh is interpreted by Jenkins as a cultural memory of when polar astronomy ruled and then was superceded by galactic astronomy. It is the case that between 3000 and 1000 BC the Big Dipper was very close to the polar region. If Jenkins is right, as it moved away, due to precession, the shift in Maya astronomy toward the galactic plane occurred. Shades of Hamlet's Mill.

There is no doubt in my mind that the precession of the winter solstice point through the various centers of the galactic axis are important astronomical events that astrologers should know about. Western astrology's dating of the precession of the Vernal equinox is so vague that the age of Aquarius is said to begin anywhere within a range of 500 years. In ancient Mexico, the astrologer-astronomers nailed the passage of the solstice to their target area in the Milky Way to within a few years, then chose to focus on the date of the Sun's arrival to that point hundreds of years ahead in their future. *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012* is, to date, the most authoritative work on this aspect of precessional astrology.